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C O N F I D E N T I A L MUSCAT 001000

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STATE FOR NEA, NEA/RA (HILL), IO/UNP (HARRIS), NEA/ARP, WHA

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SUBJECT: BUILDING SUPPORT FOR GUATEMALA IN UN SECURITY COUNCIL

REF: SECSTATE 95360

Classified By: Ambassador Gary A. Grappo. Reason: 1.4 (b, d).

1. (C) In a June 20 call on Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs Yusuf bin Alawi, the Ambassador delivered reftel points, urging Oman's support for Guatemala's candidacy to the UN Security Council. Bin Alawi noted with a smile that Venezuelan President Chavez was in Tripoli during the Minister's recent visit to Libya, saying that characters like him "make the world an amusing place." More seriously, the Minister said he was well aware of the tensions that Chavez's government has raised, both with the U.S. and more broadly within Latin America. He sees the region as at the leading edge of yet another cycle of populist movements that promise to improve the lives of citizens yet never actually deliver.

2. (C) The Minister indicated that Oman would look favorably upon Guatemala's candidacy. A Guatemalan envoy was due in Muscat in the coming week, and the Minister had already agreed to meet with him. After the Minister's political advisor Mohammed al-Hassan chimed in that Guatemala had led a failed bid for a non-permanent UNSC seat only three years ago, Bin Alawi wondered why Latin America could not come up with a stronger opponent to Venezuela. He also noted that Oman would look for an Arab League or OIC consensus before casting its vote. Should there be a consensus to back Venezuela, the Minister said Oman might be forced to abstain, though he assured that Oman would not vote in favor of Venezuela. The Ambassador reminded Bin Alawi that the UNGA vote, should it come to that point, would be by secret ballot. GRAPPO